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UNCLAS MONROVIA 000242

SIPDIS

USPS FOR OSCAR VILLANUEVA, INSPECTOR IN CHARGE  
GLOBAL SECURITY & INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

E.O. 12598: N/A

TAGS: [ECPS](#) [EAID](#) [ECON](#) [LI](#)

SUBJECT: LIBERIA: AMBASSADOR DEDICATES USPS-DONATED POST OFFICE  
BOXES

REF A) MONROVIA 33 B) 07 MONROVIA 1423

¶1. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield formally dedicated over 2,000 post office boxes and other postal equipment at the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications (MPT) on March 27. The post office boxes and postal equipment were donated by the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) and delivered March 2008 as part of the U.S. Navy's Africa Partnership Station (APS) initiative in Liberia (reftels). This is the first time in 17 years Liberians have been able to rent a personal post office box to which they have the key. Given the progress made recently by Liberia Post, we recommend resuming shipment of surplus USPS postal equipment, via APS, if possible (para 4).

¶2. In their remarks, the Ambassador and Minister of Posts and Telecommunication Jeremiah Sulunteh stressed the importance of the postal system in re-connecting Liberians to family and friends, and in supporting trade and economic revitalization. During the ceremony, Senator Blamo Nelson (Grand Kru) who is a strong supporter of the postal service, encouraged the Minister to focus on increasing postal coverage outside Monrovia. The extensive print and radio coverage of the event drew heavily from the press release and from interviews with the Ambassador and the Minister.

#### Next Steps

¶3. MPT is in the process of establishing a house numbering system to permit resumption of home mail delivery in Monrovia. In addition to the new post office boxes, Liberia Post has been issuing a wide range of new stamps, including a set featuring President Obama and Vice President Biden. Although Liberia Post now has two mail trucks and two vans, it is still far from able to transport mail domestically. (A post office official noted he had mailed himself a letter from a county post office some weeks ago, but it still has not arrived.)

¶4. Comment and Action Request: The year-long delay between delivery of the USPS equipment and dedication of the post office boxes reflects the full range of challenges facing almost any projects in Liberia. It took several months for MPT to negotiate with the port for release of the donated postal equipment (due to a dispute over a pre-war bill), more time to work through fraud issues in assigning existing post office boxes, and a few months to complete installation of the boxes in the main post office, including adding additional security features to protect the mail. MPT, like other government entities, continues to be haunted by allegations of corruption and there have been press reports Minister Sulunteh would be ousted in a cabinet reshuffle. However, perseverance by working levels at Liberia Post has paid off, and we recommend that USPS and APS support further donations of surplus USPS equipment, to permit continued expansion of postal service in Liberia.

